



MONTAGU'S 100TH BIRTHDAY

This article was compiled as a result of a comment made by Arij Tobias on The Montagu History Facebook page

The year 1954 was very busy for the residents of Montagu. There were three festivals and a special event celebrated.

A Muscadel Festival

The 100 year birthday of the Dutch Reformed Church

The 100 year birthday of the town Montagu.

Opening of the Billy Loftus Bridge (Tunnel Bridge)

It appears from available information that the Dutch Reformed Church and Municipality collaborated to celebrate both the CHURCH and TOWNS 100th birthday.

Some memories

Montagu will celebrate its centenary with song and dance

Extract from: CAPE TIMES, TUESDAY, OCTOBER 26, 1954



Montagu Centenary: The three men mainly responsible for the arrangements in connection with Montagu's centenary celebrations this coming week-end: (Left to right) The Rev. Berning Malan, chairman of the Dutch Reformed Church Committee; Mr. J. D. de Kock, ex-Mayor, chairman of the Civic Committee; and Mr. E. W. Basson, Mayor of Montagu.

Special church services, a dance, a procession of floats dancing are among the many events in an attractive programme to mark the centenary of Montagu, this week.

Following are the main items:

Thursday night.—Dance in the Avalon Hotel.

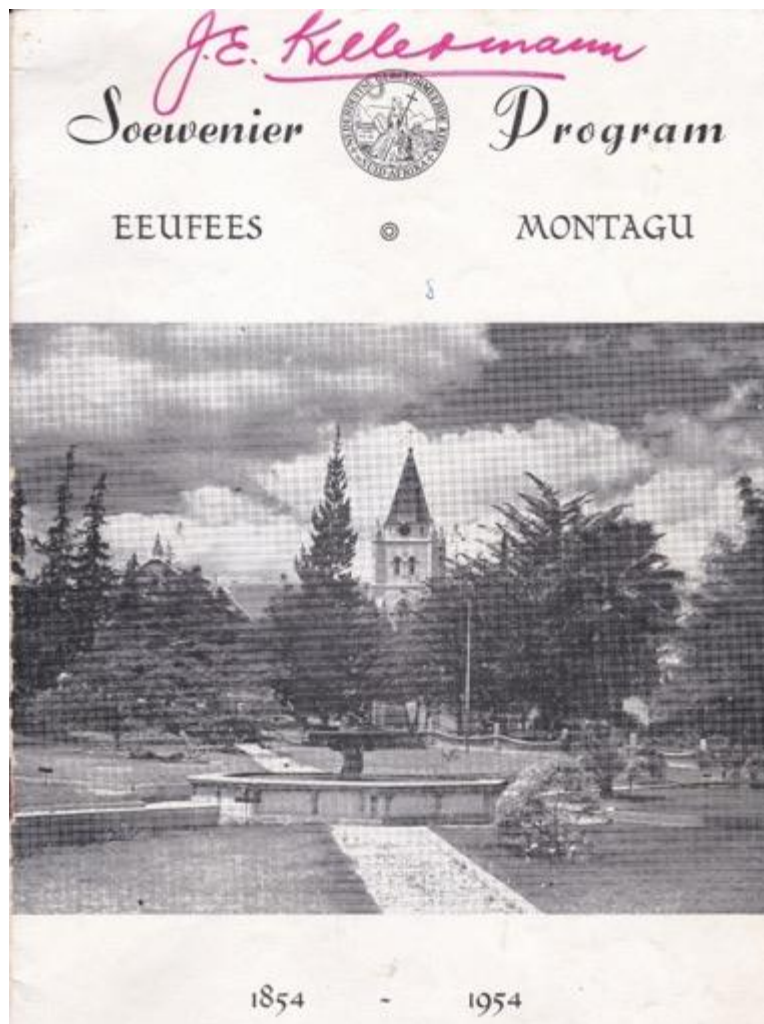
Friday, 8.p.m.—Opening of the celebrations in the Church Hall. Speakers; the Rev. B. Malan, Major R. Wessels and the Rev. D. P. van Huyssteen.

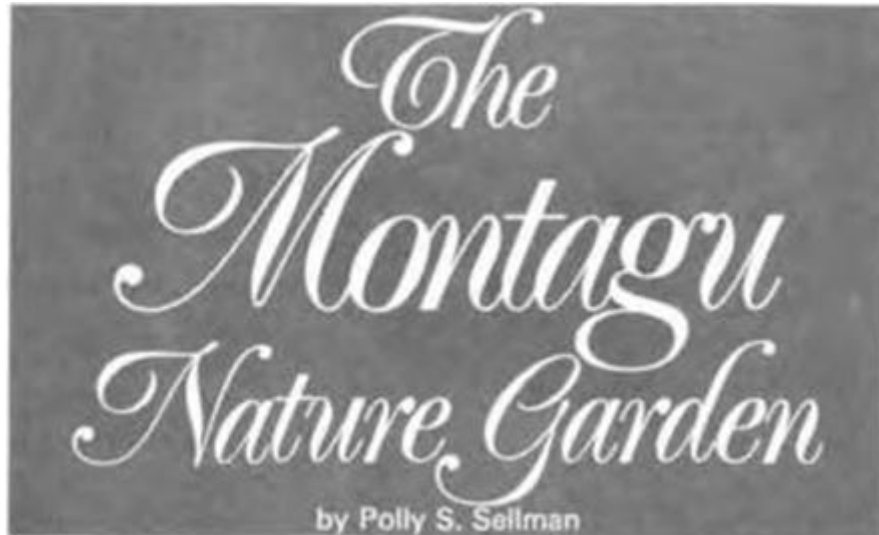
MAYOR TO SPEAK

Saturday, 9 a.m. to 12 midday. Procession of floats. At 12.15 the Mayor will speak at the new school ground. 12.45, lunch and folk dancing on the grounds. 2.30 p.m., Church service: speaker, the Rev. A. G. E. van Velden. 3.30 p.m., **opening of Nature Garden.**

4.30 to 7 p.m., braaivleis and social gathering. 8 p.m., concert in the Church Hall; speaker: the Moderator, Dr. A. J. van der Merwe.

Sunday. Church services from 7.30 a.m.





Mrs. P. S. Sellman retired from the position of accountant at the Cape Chamber of Industries in 1969, settled at Montagu, became a member of the Horticultural Society in 1971 and Secretary in 1973.

Article: From Veld & Flora December 1976



Montagu Eeufees Natuurtuin

In 1954 toe Montagu 100 jaar oud was, het die idee ontstaan om 'n natuurtuin aan te lê. Op 22 Junie is die Montagu- Tuinbouvereniging gestig op 'n openbare vergadering onder die voorsitter skap van mnr. E. J. Basson, destyds burgemeester van Montagu. Daar is besluit dat die Natuurtuin aangelê sou word op 14 merge grond teen die hange van Bessiekop.

Die aanvoerwerk is hoofsaaklik gedoen deur mev. Justine Basson en haar niggie mej. Babsie van Zyl, en hulle het behoorlik pik geslaan, want die grond was hard en onvrugbaar! Mettertyd is 'n besproeiingstelsel aangebring, 'n teekamer gebou, elektrisiteit aangelê en uiteindelik ook 'n kurator aangestel. Die tuin is nou behoorlik en deeglik gevestig, die stadsraad hanteer die finansies en dit word gesubsidieer deur die Provinsiale Raad. 'n Adviesraad in samewerking met die Montagu-Tuinbouvereniging bestuur dit plaaslik.

Die Natuurtuin is by uitstek 'n lentetuin, en is op sy mooiste vanaf Augustus tot Oktober. Op Dinsdag oggende tussen 10 en 12 word tee bedien in die tuin. Toegang is vry.

THE IDEA - call it rather inspiration - was the spontaneous outcome of an unplanned meeting of three Montagu enthusiasts one rainy evening in 1954. It was the town's centenary year - surely an anniversary to be marked in some very special way - so thought Montagu's mayor and mayoress, Mr. and Mrs. E. J. Basson, known to all as Ewie and Justine, and the town engineer, Mr. T. D. McSweeney.

Montagu is a picturesque little town with a wealth of historical associations and a population inordinately proud of its charm and history. What better way to commemorate its centenary than by the establishment of a nature garden?

The idea of our three enthusiasts spread; soon more town's people were infected and on 22nd June 1954 Ewie Basson convened a meeting at which the Montagu Horticultural Society was formally established. Its primary object was the beautification of the town and the first step in this direction the laying out of an indigenous flower garden on a site bordering the outskirts, on the slopes of a koppie with the quaint Hottentot name of Noemnoembessiekop (*Carissa grandiflora*).

The proposal was wholly admirable, but bringing it to fruition was a long, heart and back breakingly difficult undertaking. Noemnoembessiekop was ideally situated but the soil on its slopes and surrounds couldn't have been more arid and infertile. Furthermore Montagu was experiencing one of its periodic droughts; the little stream which meandered lazily at the foot of the chosen site had almost ceased to flow and the water in it was distinctly brackish. But Justine and her cousin Babsie van Zyl - the two prime movers in the project worked on the principle that difficulties were there to be overcome which they illustrated by getting down to the job with pick and shovel. Tuesday was their day for working in the Garden, very often quite alone and with no outside assistance.

Initially the only way a plant could be persuaded to take root was to plant it in a hole laboriously dug in the hard unyielding shale, which was then lined with soil and well-watered. But the drought combined with the unfavourable weather wiped out the first year's efforts completely. Everything planted with such hopeful effort came to naught.

Nothing daunted they started again; the village authorities gave practical assistance, notably the town engineer Mr. McSweeney, who was instrumental in installing the irrigation system; a few more of the townsfolk (predominantly women) turned up on Tuesdays to help dig and plant; the town council fenced the 14 morgen allocated for the Garden, and generally things started looking up. The packing case shelter and repository for garden tools was replaced by a natural stone hut, appropriately called JUSTBABS as a reminder of the two indefatigable founders. The municipality occasionally lent labourers; Ewie Basson gave the finances a lift by collecting £350 from sympathizers; the Garden was beginning to take shape and, the display of *Mesembrianthemum*, *gazanias*, *ursinias*, *arctotis*, flax and Namaqualand daisies was already evoking comment from visitors.

Then came the first big breakthrough when Mr. Schreiber, formerly of Kirstenbosch National Botanical Gardens, came to live at Montagu and was appointed to take charge of the Garden first on a temporary basis, three days a week, and later permanently, full time. This appointment was most fortunate: Mr. Schreiber was as dedicated as the founders, his knowledge and expertise were invaluable and folk still speak with appreciation of his improvements in the layout, plantings and general organization.

By this time, through the good offices of the town engineer and the municipal council, a thatch-roofed entrance gateway and a building incorporating a tea-kitchen and seed storeroom had been completed. Real progress was now evident. Then to the great sorrow of all, Mr. Schreiber passed

away, but his loving spirit must surely still wander along the paths and slopes he did so much to beautify.

Then, by a stroke of luck, Mr. J. A. Kok, affectionately known as Oom Koos, was appointed Curator. Mr. Kok had been employed by Lord and Lady de Saumarez at their estate Springfield in the Bredasdorp district where he had worked with much success in the spectacular gardens and hot-houses. Mr. Kok has a wealth of knowledge of our indigenous flora and is a mine of information on everything connected with it. It is 12 years since his appointment, and the beauty and variety of the Garden bears testimony to the thought, loving care and wide knowledge which have distinguished his curatorship.

The Garden is at its best in the springtime - from the beginning of August to the middle of October - longer after good rains. *Polygala myrtifolia* (September bossie) and *Euryops* (Harpuis) start making a colourful appearance in August; *Gazania pinnata*, large and brilliant in shades of pale yellow to deepest orange, in August, September and October; *Dimorphotheca* and *Ursinia anthemoides*, like prayer rugs every-where; *Heliophila* (flax) in shades of blue, and patches of white daisies act as a foil to the golden-hued blooms at the entrance to the garden.

The original little stream, now somewhat enlarged, still separates the entrance from the garden; the two rustic bridges add to the rural picturesqueness of the surroundings. But the pride and joy of the Garden are the vygies (*Mesembrianthemum*) in their incredible variety. They grow in clumps all over - nature here assisted by the expertise of Oom Koos and his labourers - and are spectacular on the slopes of Noemnoembessiekop behind the tea-house. In good years they flow across the slope shading from cream to yellow to orange to deep crimson.

Attracting special attention always is the *Drosanthemum speciosum* which thrives particularly well in our climate. In September and October come the watsonias - suurknolle in the vernacular - tall and short, big and small in lovely shades of pink and mauve (*pyramidata* and *marginata*), pale biscuit (hybrid) and virginal white (*ardernei*); Oom Koos has grouped them in a large area to the right of the entrance. Then, to round off the colourful spring, is the royal blue *Aristea thyrsoflora*.

Today, 22 years after its inception, the Montagu Centenary Nature Garden, firmly established, is a popular tourist attraction; it is subsidized by the provincial administration with labour provided by the municipal council, but with the personal touch of the local committee still evident.

Of the original zealots, Ewie Basson is still President - surely a record - and Justine (Hon. Vice-President) still much involved and our best publicity agent; Babsie, regrettably, for family reasons had to pull out some years ago, but remains interested and helpful; Esther Hofmeyr, whose small son and daughter regularly accompanied her to the garden on Tuesdays, remains active and full of ideas. Some of the other stalwarts like aunts Daisy and Mimi Joubert and Hettie du Toit, though no longer on the Committee frequently come up for tea on Tuesday mornings. Yes, Tuesday is still Garden Day - tea and home - made goodies are now the attraction between 10 a.m. and 12 noon. Locals bring their guests and hotels tell their visitors. For Montagu it is an opportunity to show off the Garden with pride and to offer true Boland hospitality to all comers.

Here too, we pay tribute to botanists and horticulturists who over the years have given wise counsel and encouragement to the little group of enthusiastic amateurs who made a dream come true. Prof. Brian Rycroft, for many years our Honorary President, is an ever present help in time of need, as is Dr. Douglas Hey, Director of Nature Conservation in the Cape and an Honorary member of our Committee, and Mr. John Winter, Curator of the National Botanic Gardens at Kirstenbosch, our guest speaker at the 1975 Annual General Meeting. These are but a few of the good friends of our Horticultural Association but we remember with gratitude a host of others. Montagu has three hotels, the Avalon and the Montagu in the village, and the Baths Hotel at the site of the well - known mineral

baths about 2,5 km out of the village. Here there is also an excellent caravan park with all the necessary facilities.

How to get there Approaching from the Cape Peninsula you take the National Road through Worcester (well signposted), on through Robertson and Ashton, then through the awe inspiring Cogman's Kloof, over the bridge and into historical Long Street; proceed to the junction with Kerkstraat (on the right is an excellent example of Georgian architecture and on the left the thatch-roofed cottage of the artist Francois Krige), turn right up Kerkstraat, cross the Kingna bridge, take the first turning left into van Riebeeck Street, pass the High School with their colourful gardens; drive on for about 50 m to see the entrance to the Garden with its thatched gateway on the right. There is no entrance fee, just walk in, cross one of the wooden bridges and amble up the gentle slope which fronts the teahouse.

A picture posting triggers memories

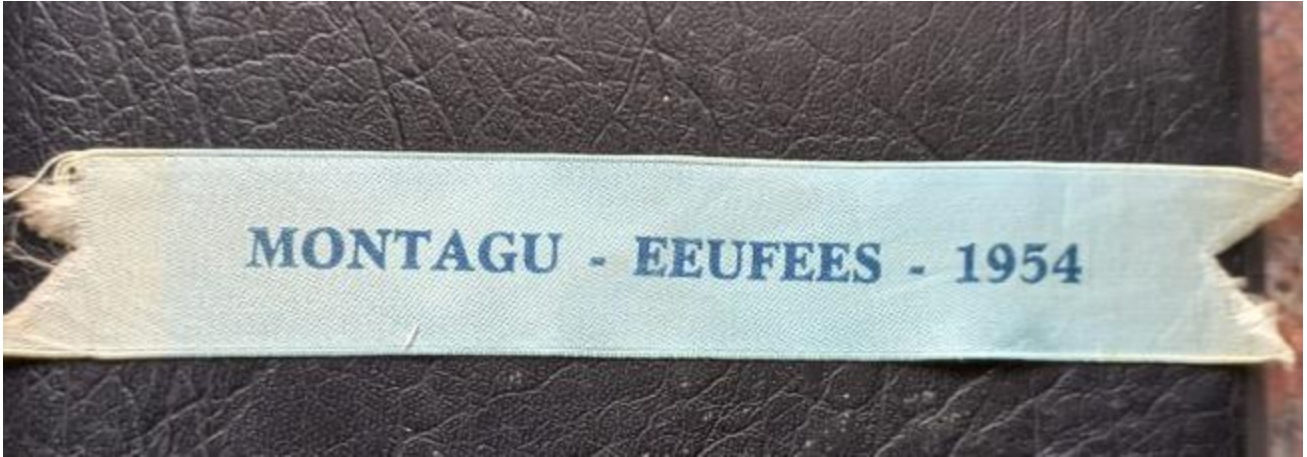
Picture/comment: Stefani Simons/Montagu History F/B page



Ek het hierdie foto by Santie Pienaar gekry. Dalk is hier iemand wat vir ons kan se of die foto sy oorsprong in Montagu of Ladysmith het. Dit is tydens 'n feesviering geneem en hulle was op die Ossewa vlot. Op die foto in swart rok is Sannatjie TerBlanche, vrou van oud Skoolhoof in 50's Mnr. I. S. TerBlanche, en die 3 dogters Cordia (oud Hoofdogter), Miemsie en Santie in hul Voortrekker drag. Ons hoor graag of iemand kan se waar foto geneem is. Groete xxx

Comments: Arij Tobias /Montagu History F/B page

There were people dressed up like that during the "**Eeufees**" in 1954. Nobody even mentioned the Eeufees. I remember my class teacher Miss Smit borrowing a "voortrekker kappie" from my grandmother. She was also on a float going through the streets. I had a little blue ribbon with Eeufees written on it but lost it in a library book.



Picture: Anelma Oosthuizen

I was six and will never forget the nice food they made in that park where the market is on a Saturday. And when the wagon came past me with my teacher, in my granny's Voortrekker Kappie" my day was made.

Comment: Elise le Roux/Montagu History F/B page

Elise le Roux: Onthou die Eeufees in 1954. Kan ook die perdekarre onthou. Was saam met Miemsie mnr. Terblanche en sy vrou se middelste dogter. Hulle was wonderlike mense.

Gallery



Ou stoker vir wyn, en Dawid wat so sit en dink met leë beker in die hand



Toe trap. Treading grapes for wine

Willie Joubert (met fluitjie), Willie Kriel, Adri Basson, Gert Saayman





L/R: Mej. Ravenscroft, Kerrie van Zyl, onbekend, Reneë le Roux en Rina Ritter. Dame voor onbekend.

*Mnr. W. Rossouw en
Volkspele laërs*



*Mnr. Pierre Burger en
Mej. Hannah de Kock*



Mnr. Dawid Claassens



L/R: Piet de Kock, Piet Verryinne, M. Verryinne, Mnr. De Kock (Afdelingsraad), J.H. Smit, Rasie Swanepoel, Japie Smit

Die Afdelingsraad was ook daar





Gert Burger en hospitaal personeel



*Mnr. Rae van Kaapstad
het ook kom deelneem*



Murray Wolfaardt en Carine Swart

